

The Redoubts in the Balaklava North Valley - as seen by William Simpson

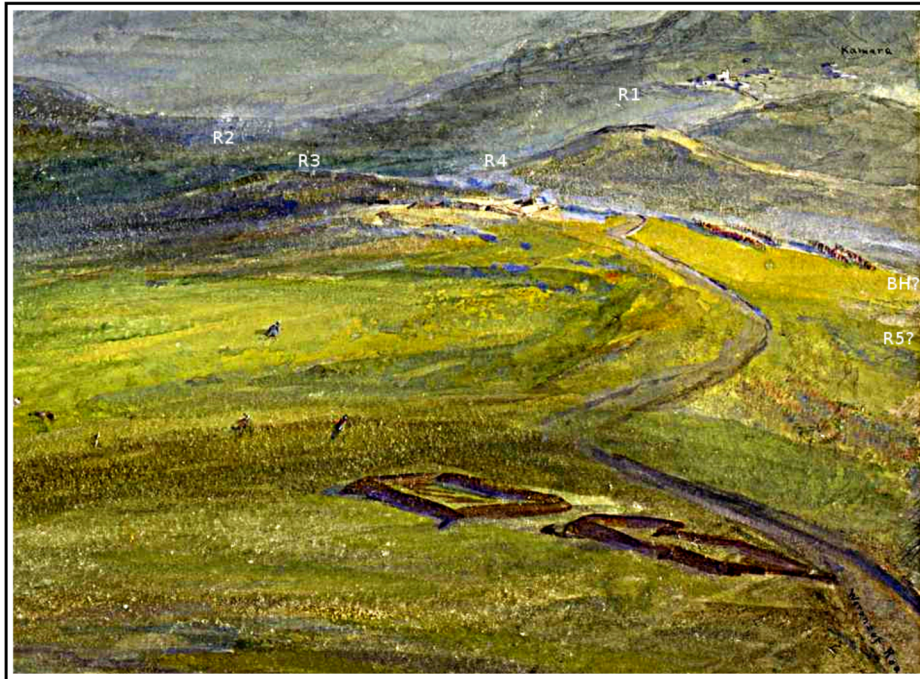
by Dr Douglas J Austin TWC, 36(1), 14-16, 2018

The artist William Simpson was in the Crimea from November, 1854 to November, 1855. His magnificent sketchbook in the Victoria and Albert Collection includes the following pencil images:- (1) "*Plan of Light Cavalry Charge made on the spot, while explaining it to me, by Lord George Paget. 20 Augt. 1855.*" D-424-1900 - an overhead rough view of the Allied cavalry movements; (2) "*sketch of Light cavalry charge from the description of Lord George Paget on the spot where the engagement took place. (20th August, 1855).*" D.425-1900 - a view of the second line of the Light Brigade hitting the Russian guns, as seen from the Fedioukine Heights. These and other Simpson images are readily available via the URL:- <https://collections.vam.ac.uk/>.

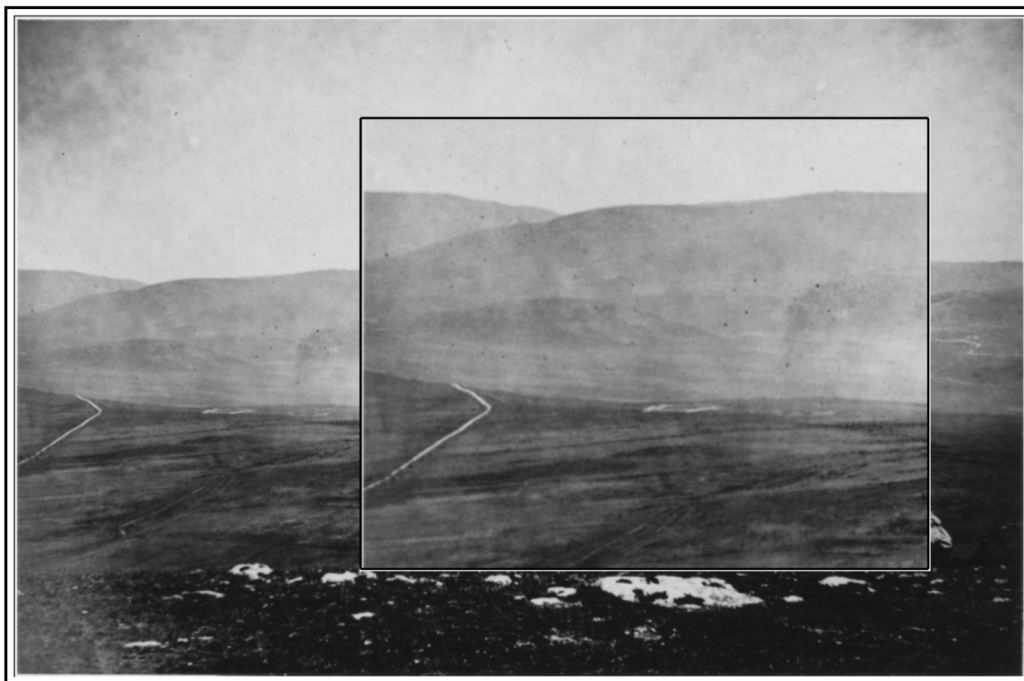
This watercolour image from his sketchbook is entitled "*The Ground of the Light Cavalry Charge*" (Museum number D.426-1900 : © Victoria and Albert Museum, London). I have downloaded it at the maximum allowed 768 pixels width, enhanced it to improve its clarity and have added text in WHITE - to compensate for Simpson's minuscule writing. Simpson's view, from the Sapun Gora, was roughly to the east. From right to left, Kamara (*named*) and **Redoubt 1** are clearly seen. **Redoubts 2 and 3** are less distinct but **Redoubt 4** is visible in a patch of sunshine. The two entrenchments in the foreground, north of the Voronzoff Road (*named*), are **neither of Redoubts 5 or 6**, both of which lay to the right - south of the road. From the left, I can see a distinctive tower (the "*Tour Octogone*" on Blondel's 1854 French map) at the hamlet of Karlovka - to the right of an obvious pyramidal hillock. "Tchorgouna" (*named* - now Chourgoun) actually lies concealed behind the left edge of that hillock.



Further to my recent article (*This journal*, 34(1), 27, 2016) I have re-examined this image and I suggest that Simpson may have included his view of all 5 (**R1-R5**) redoubts on the Causeway Heights. Below, is an enlarged extract from the enhanced original - with my assignments of the redoubt locations in WHITE. I note an oval or circular depression cut into the overlying greenery on the right. I suggest that it may be close to the hastily-constructed **R5** (which interpreter John Blunt reached just in time to save himself). The **R5?** (spoil-heap?) location appears to be close to the white **R5?** feature shown in the Fenton Panorama 4 photograph (below). If so, the nearby **BH?** location may be where Nolan met Lucan and passed on the 4th Order to the Cavalry.



© V&A : Extract from enhanced Simpson watercolour



Fenton Panorama 4 + extract : Royal Collection Trust: © HM Queen Elizabeth II

Similarly, the double entrenchments shown in the foreground of Simpson's watercolour correspond very well with the traced areas in Fenton Panorama 3 (below) - given that the artist was ca. one mile south of the photographer. Those entrenchments were certainly not **Redoubt 6** - which was never more than traced out. Fenton took his Panorama in early April, 1855, but Simpson's watercolour may date on or after 20th August, 1855.



Fenton Panorama 3 + extract : Royal Collection Trust: © HM Queen Elizabeth II

While the topography of the region appears to be quite accurate, Simpson has embellished his watercolour with somewhat fanciful and unnamed representations of the Allied cavalry. I refer to the locations of the 4th Chasseurs d'Afrique on their way up the Fedioukine Heights, the British Light Brigade (in two lines rather three?) on its way to the Russian Don No. 3 Heavy Battery (*named*) and beyond to the Chernaya river and the aqueduct, two lines of cavalry (the Heavy Brigade?) apparently to the south of Redoubt 4. Given Simpson's artistic licence, those locations must be regarded as suspect, while this is not to deny the dramatic impact of his work.

Acknowledgements: I thank the Victoria and Albert Museum (Prints and Drawings) and the Royal Collection Trust.